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July 3, 1952

Mr. Allen W. Dulles,
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C.

Dear Allen:

I enclose herewith the minutes of the June meeting of the Panel of Consultants on Disarmament. As you will see, they are somewhat cryptic in form; it seemed important to us to protect the anonymity of our witnesses. I think perhaps you already know who most of them were, but when we next meet, I shall be happy to give you the information personally. I should add, I think, that the minutes may perhaps give a somewhat more definite picture of our discussions than is in fact accurate. I have found, in writing them up, that somewhat more clarity emerges if I try to define positions sharply; but I should warn you that the actual state of our deliberations is far from clear, and I think it plain that the August meetings will, in essence, start from scratch.

These August meetings will probably be those at which the bulk of our work is done, and of course, we all hope very much indeed that you may be able to come for at least some of the sessions. Yet we all understand that your relationship to the Panel must necessarily be limited by your very heavy obligations to your present agency, and we are prepared to be eager to make matters as easy as possible for you. In particular, I myself hope that you will feel free to call me down to hear your views on any part of this matter any time that suits you. I shall be in Washington during the first days of next week (in Washington and not in Chicago!), and I shall call you then to see if we could get together briefly.

I hope that the gout is behaving better; I also hope that you will forgive me for sending you so much paper.

Yours,

State Dept. review completed

Mac

McGeorge Bundy, Executive Secretary

McGB:gw
Encl.

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Panel of Consultants on Disarmament

Minutes of Meeting of
June 19 - 21, 1952
at
Cambridge, Massachusetts

I. Members Present

Dr. Oppenheimer, Mr. Johnson, and the Executive Secretary were present throughout; Mr. Dickoy was present on June 19 and 20. Mr. Dulles and Dr. Bush were unable to be present.

II. The Character of the Meeting

These meetings were held mainly for the purpose of discussing general aspects of the problem of disarmament with a number of visiting experts. The Panel made no effort to reach any conclusions, and the following account of discussions is presented purely for the use of Panel members. The subjects of discussion are presented in the order in which they were considered during the committee's meetings, with a minimum of interpolation and organization.

III. Attitudes of the Government of the USSR

The first session of the meetings was devoted to a discussion of Soviet attitudes with a student of Soviet problems. This student strongly advised the Panel to approach its problem without immediate reference to Soviet attitudes toward disarmament or to Soviet willingness to accept any given disarmament plan. He felt strongly that the committee should consider disarmament from "a coldly technical point of view"; it should try to formulate a disarmament plan which would work without considering whether or not such a plan could be put into immediate effect. Any other course, in the view of this guest, would lead to a morass; efforts to satisfy present Soviet attitudes could only produce an endless series of destructive concessions.

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While the panel should work from a technical base, it should nevertheless try to reduce the requirements of its plan to the minimum necessary for long-term effectiveness. This minimum might turn out to be well below the point of total security. In response to questions, the guest expert acknowledged that the technical minimum could hardly be designed without some reference to both the expansionist ambitions and the defensive fears of the Soviet Union, but he maintained his basic position that the central considerations in present disarmament planning were technical in character. He believed that it would be a great contribution to national policy-making if the Panel should be able to provide a basic plan which could offer not total security but

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a measure of safety which would permit a real relaxation in the arms race. He further pointed out that this minimum level of safety remained a very substantial goal, in view of the fact that it would be necessary to include in any such minimum plan some method for practical and self-sustaining enforcement of any agreements which might be reached. In response to this comment, a Panel member noted that this problem of self-sustaining enforcement was one of the continuing difficulties in all disarmament efforts; it was no simple matter to design a plan which would be immune to both irrational fear and complacent neglect.

If it should prove possible to outline a reasonable and acceptable basic plan for disarmament, the next problem would be that of finding a way to produce agreement to such a plan on the part of the Soviet Union. On this point, the Panel's guest took the basic position that "events are more important than proposals." He believed that statements of policy, in and of themselves, could never persuade the Soviet Union of the good intentions of the United States or the desirability of disarmament. Soviet leaders would be prepared to bargain seriously about the control of armaments only if they became persuaded that such control was necessary in the interest of the USSR itself. The two sets of facts which might conceivably persuade them to such a conclusion were first, "situations of strength" on the part of the West, and second, the facts of modern physics. He thought it likely that in the years immediately after the ending of the Second World War, the Soviet Union had seriously underestimated both the strength of the West and the power of atomic weapons. In particular, there have been reports that high Soviet authorities seriously regarded the atomic bomb as merely a weapon for terrorizing civilians - a weapon not having first-rate significance in the conduct of war. If it was a major objective of Western diplomacy to bring the Soviet Union to a willingness to consider in serious terms the problem of disarmament, then this diplomacy should be energetically devoted to sharpening Soviet awareness of Western strength and of the strength of the atom.

Judging from present appearances, a major effort of diplomacy would be necessary both to bring the Soviet Union to an awareness of the need for disarmament and to work out an agreed plan for disarmament on the basis of such a willingness. In this double task, the Panel's guest recommended that the Western powers should resort to a kind of "delegated diplomacy"; they should entrust their side of the negotiations to a single individual. It seemed quite possible, for example, that some constructive result might come from conversations between Ambassador Kennan and Generalissimo Stalin; but no one could feel hopeful about conversations between a group of Western dignitaries, however capable, and any Russian authority, however exalted. Given the very great power of the United States and its pre-eminent position in the production of weapons of mass destruction, it seemed obvious that the chosen instrument of negotiation must be an American;

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this requirement posed a problem for American diplomats in dealing with other great western powers.

In summary, the proposals of the Panel's guest expert on the Soviet Union were three: first, prepare disarmament proposals technically adequate to give a basic level of international safety; second, bring to the attention of the rulers of the Soviet Union facts sufficient to persuade them that the acceptance of a disarmament plan is in their interest; third, negotiate an agreement on disarmament through a single diplomatic agent, an American acting for all the major Western powers.

When questioned about the danger of an international explosion in the period before any international agreement on disarmament is reached, the Panel's Soviet expert stated that in his opinion the gravest dangers would come from points of friction like Berlin and Korea; he was not unduly alarmed by the possibility that developments in the field of weapons might so terrify the Soviet Union that it would start a "preventive war" of its own. He felt that war was always a very heavy risk to the Soviet Regime, because of the social tensions of the police state. Soviet rulers were well aware of the danger of war, in his opinion, and he thought on the whole that "they will not commit suicide for fear of death". He could see no reason for postponing or delaying the American development of new and even larger weapons of mass destruction; he did not believe that these developments would drive the Soviet leaders to desperate measures, and he thought it clear that the Soviet Union would itself proceed toward such weapons in any case.*

In response to another question, the Panel's guest agreed that it would be necessary for any disarmament agreement to be accompanied by a certain political stabilization. He thought that with the exception of Berlin, the basic outlines of a stable situation were developing in Western Europe, but he was much less certain about the character of the situation in Asia. Clearly, any agreement to limit the production and use of weapons would involve an understanding that the inevitable hostility between the USSR and the West should be transferred to other fields of contest, and it would be of great importance to have a clear understanding of both the limits of the new area and the rules of the new contest.

IV. U.S. Attitudes

The second witness to appear before the Panel turned out to be concerned primarily with the American response to the developing situation in weapons. He thought it of particular importance to find some way of bringing home to the American people the fact that the United States is most unusually vulnerable to atomic weapons. Leaving aside

*For a different view, see part VII below.

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the possibility of a thermo-nuclear weapon, he remarked that developments in the field of fission weapons had so multiplied the power of the atomic bomb since 1945 as to make a single bomb capable of the total destruction of all but a very few of the largest American cities. In considering these weapons, the ordinary American seemed to believe that the major point was the capacity of Americans to deliver such a blow on others, while the more significant fact was that now and in the future such blows could be delivered by others on the United States. The Panel's guest felt that an adequate American awareness of this second point was a necessary condition for the kind of development in policy which might make it possible for the United States to participate effectively in disarmament planning and in disarmament itself. Once the danger of atomic weapons was sufficiently widely recognized, it might become possible to get a further development of American strength in conventional weapons, and if this strength should become sufficient to balance the Soviet strength in the same kind of weapons, it would become possible for the United States to dispense with its present reliance on atomic bombs. Under questioning from members of the Panel, the Panel's guest agreed that it might no longer be possible to make a sharp distinction between conventional and atomic weapons. He nevertheless believed that an awareness of the character of atomic weapons and the threat to the United States which they represented was a necessary first step toward effective thinking about the problem of control of armaments. He hoped that the Panel would be able to give some attention to the question of public education which was posed by this problem.

Almost more important than the problem of public attitudes, however, was that of the attitude of the leaders of the American military establishment. It was unfortunate, in his view, that earlier proposals had been made without full coordination between civil and military authorities. It would be very difficult for the United States to give energetic and genuine support to proposals for disarmament in the field of atomic weapons as long as the chiefs of the American military establishment relied almost exclusively upon the atomic weapon as their principal means of retaliation against major aggression and as their principal hope of victory in the event of all-out war. And if American military leaders were to be induced to look toward a time when they might give up this Sunday punch, they must be persuaded that atomic weapons in the long run are on balance a danger to the United States. The Panel's guest therefore hoped that it might be willing to lend its support to a proposal for the establishment of a high-level committee, with competent military representation, which might have the duty of maintaining a continuous and effective estimate of the overall weapons position. Such a committee, he hoped, might be useful in developing an awareness, throughout the defense establishment, of the ~~developing~~ ^{changing} character of the race in weapons of mass destruction. It might also be desirable to make certain that the military leaders of the nation felt equally responsible for both overseas attacks and the domestic defense of the United States; at the present, it seemed as if many of those having high authority were more concerned about what they

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could do to the other fellow than they were about what the other fellow could do to us.

The Panel's guest was certain that there should be an increase in American awareness of the character of the atomic arms race, and its meaning for the United States. When it came to more specific recommendations and suggestions, he was more reticent and more tentative. He suggested the possibility that it might be desirable to obtain press cooperation in commenting upon prospective atomic developments. He also thought that it might be a good sign if the United States could reach a stage in its military position in which it would become possible for us to announce officially that we would not be the first to use atomic weapons in any new war. Yet he recognized that such a statement, in and of itself, might well be unwise. What he wished to indicate was his belief that it might still be possible to separate atomic weapons from "bayonets".

V. Deterrents

During the Panel's discussion with the third and fourth guest during this series of meetings, two problems were of central importance, and it seems best to treat each one fully in one place, incorporating in the discussion comments made during the questioning of both guests. The first problem is that of "Deterrents", and the second is that of "Control".

The Panel's discussion of "Deterrents" produced two major lines of argument. On the one hand it was claimed that the prospective development of large atomic stockpiles in both the Soviet Union and the United States made agreement on the control of atomic weapons imperative, in order to avoid the destruction of civilization itself. On the other hand, it was argued that perhaps it is the very existence of these atomic stockpiles which stays the hand of statesmen who might otherwise resort to major war.

Those who argued the necessity for controlling atomic weapons were of the opinion that large stockpiles of atomic bombs would almost inevitably create a state of nervousness in the world such that sooner or later some ruling group would find it intolerable to continue inactive in such a state of tension and would unleash atomic war, hoping against hope that to strike first might be to insure the survival of its own society. Even though perhaps rational men might not be entitled to reach any such optimistic conclusion, it seemed too much to hope that in a world of stockpiled devilment, those in control of the weapons would always be rational as they faced these options. It was important to observe that in the case of large stockpiles, it was necessary for statesmen to reach the pacific conclusion not once, nor twice, but every time they considered the problem. Whatever might be the behavior of two scorpions in a can, it seemed to some members of the Panel and

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to some of its guests that the picture of two great groups of Powers facing each other tranquilly, with such weapons at hand, was fanciful. It might be true that in the present situation the existence of atomic weapons somewhat inhibited the willingness of the major powers to contest by force relatively small problems, although the case of Korea rendered this judgment somewhat doubtful. But any possible minor stability in a world full of atomic weapons seemed of small importance compared to its very high dangers, especially as time passed.

To one member of the Panel, however, those arguments were not wholly persuasive. Without committing himself as to his final view of the problem, he suggested that it would be wise to consider whether it might not prove true that atomic weapons were the only sufficient deterrent to war in present circumstances. Might it not be true, this member asked, that the atomic weapon in itself was a damper upon aggressive action? Might it not be true, further, that the real incentive to war lay in large supplies of conventional weapons, and might it not be wise, then, to begin in disarmament with these conventional weapons? These hypotheses seemed to him worth examining for, after all, the major problem was to prevent war, and not specifically to prevent atomic war. Atomic stockpiles might be destroyed, but there was no way to destroy the knowledge in human minds that atomic bombs could be constructed. Therefore in the event of major war, should it last long enough, atomic bombs would certainly be made and used. So all large wars would be atomic wars and the problem was to avoid war itself. If atomic weapons themselves constituted a deterrent against war, they might be more useful in existence than in long-range potential only.

A somewhat different but related line of argument in defense of atomic weapons was put forward in tentative fashion by another member of the Panel, who asked whether the atomic weapon was not an essential element in the willingness of the United States to act responsibly and positively in international affairs beyond the boundaries of the American continent. Would we, for example, have intervened in Korea if we had not had the atomic bomb? And if we accepted some control of atomic weapons today, might we not find ourselves driven back on the defensive in the international contest, short of war, which is certain to continue between us and the Soviet Union? Was there not a sense, in short, in which the atomic weapon was the most natural one to American policy?

The suggestion that it might be unwise to accept or seek atomic controls brought forth a critical response from others in the discussion. Such deterrent effect as atomic bombs might in fact have, it was argued, would be maintained even if they should be brought under control and existing stockpiles destroyed. All parties would know that any major war, if long continued, would become atomic in character, and a potential Soviet aggressor, in particular, would know that in a start from scratch the United States would almost certainly have a major advantage.

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To the Soviet mind, it was suggested, the principal deterrent strength of the United States has not been atomic bombs, even in recent years; it has been, rather, the enormous industrial capacity of the United States, which guarantees its ability to resist and retaliate in any major war. This deterrent capacity would be maintained, and indeed greatly increased, in a situation in which atomic stockpiles no longer existed, for in such a situation there would be no possibility that a determined blow struck with surprise by the Soviet Union might destroy American productive capacity. While no claim was made that the Soviet Union has at present this overwhelming capability, it seemed clear, simply as a matter of arithmetic and time, that in a world without limitation on weapons of mass destruction the day would come when it would be wholly possible for a Soviet ruler to suppose that he had it in his power to strike such a decisive blow at the American economy.

In response to the suggestion that the atomic bomb might be a necessary underpinning for present American policy, it was remarked that while it might be true that the bomb had played an essential part in permitting American activity in recent years, it could hardly continue to play the same role in the approaching period of high Soviet atomic capability. Here perhaps the arguments made by others about American vulnerability are pertinent.

The exchange of views on the subject of deterrents did not result in any final agreement on the major propositions involved, but certain lesser points were in fact settled. It was agreed, for example, that any international agreement on the limitation of weapons would presuppose some limited international political understanding. It was also agreed that a number of wars which can be fought in the atomic era is finite; this conclusion has considerable implications which were not fully explored by the Panel in these meetings. Finally, it was agreed that the character of an effective deterrent changes as one moves from Moscow to Western Europe to the United States. The significance of this change was, again, not fully explored.

VI. The Problem of Control

With only brief discussion and with no apparent disagreement, the Panel concentrated its attention, in so far as it considered controls in any disarmament scheme, upon the problem of controlling both atomic and conventional weapons. It seemed plain that no stable balance of power could readily be obtained if only atomic weapons were controlled or limited, and at the same time, it was believed that it would be more readily possible to operate a system of minimum controls over conventional than over atomic weapons. Large quantities of conventional armaments are highly visible.

It was also agreed that it was not the function of the panel to try to devise a water-tight scheme of total control. What was

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needed was rather a plan under which it would be impossible for any one nation or group of nations to achieve in secret a level of armament, atomic or conventional, sufficient to permit a successful surprise assault upon other major powers. Even if a higher degree of completeness in control were desirable, it must now be recognized to be impossible. It will not be possible for any system of inspection after the event to determine with complete accuracy the exact number of Soviet atomic bombs. Even if post-facto inspection should be accurate within perhaps 10% - and this is not impossible - some fissionable material could be concealed.

Five years ago the prospect of four or five or perhaps even a dozen undetected atomic bombs would have made men believe that no effective scheme of disarmament was possible. In that period it was customary to think of the atomic bomb as an "absolute weapon", such that two or three bombs might determine a war between major powers. In 1952, no responsible American military leader takes this position. So long as atomic weapons can be numbered in units - and perhaps even as long as they can be numbered in two figures - they fall in the category of enormously destructive irritants, but not in that of "absolute weapons". And in these circumstances, the motive for cheating a system of inspection and control is drastically reduced. The consequences of such cheating, in terms of international retaliation and general world opinion, might well be so great as to discourage even the most cynical from attempting a course which by itself would not be decisive in any case.

Given the problem of operating a scheme designed to prevent the secret achievement of a capacity to destroy a hostile society, the Panel gave some attention to the basic requirements for such a system. It seemed to be the general view that such a system should have at least the following elements: disclosure, verification, and agreed limits of armament in various categories. There also seemed to be agreement that the objective in each component of this system should be not to obtain a rigorous accuracy, but rather to make certain that nothing of decisive significance was being overlooked. This difference of attitude permits a considerably less rigid scheme of disclosure and control than that which is contemplated in the current United Nations Atomic Energy Plan. This lack of rigor might permit a system of inspection which would be less galling to the rulers of the Soviet Union than the systems which have been suggested in connection with other disarmament proposals. The two expert guests whom the Panel consulted were in agreement that a few hundred qualified observers could quite easily insure that no major clandestine armament effort was undertaken in the Soviet Union if they had the following rights: (1) To go anywhere they chose upon a show of cause, (2) To inspect all acknowledged armaments establishments at any time, and (3) To require answers to their questions from authorized supervisory personnel. The significant point about these three conditions is that none of them requires that

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the inspectors be permitted to conduct conversations with the ordinary Soviet citizen; nor does any one of them require that he be permitted to proceed without the usual MVD escort. These considerations are important in view of the testimony given to the Panel by its Soviet specialist to the effect that the principal Soviet fear of inspection arose from the feeling that the inspector might contaminate or infect Soviet citizens with the ideas of the non-Soviet world. It should perhaps be noted, however, that this estimate of a few hundred inspectors is predicated on two assumptions; first that it is only a major effort which needs to be detected, and second, that in its initial establishment, the disarmament system would be founded upon a much more extensive and rigorous examination of the industry of the Soviet Union. But neither this more extensive initial inspection nor the inspection problem as a whole, was impressive to the committee's two technical guests; both of them were of the opinion that if any system of control of arms should become possible, the matter of inspection would become trivial, since they believed that the Soviet Union would be far more insistent on a detailed and extensive system of disclosure and verification than the United States. The Russians, in their opinion, would be much more fearful than the Americans of entering any system not iron-clad in its protections.

After this discussion of controls, one member of the Panel asked, "Is a controlled world real?" To this a guest expert remarked that it was not unreal, that in essence what was proposed was an extension of the traditional system of military attachés; it might be better, indeed, to consider the system of inspection as one of facilitated intelligence, and not as a fully developed inspectorate. It was not unreasonable to suppose that a system of facilitated intelligence could be developed, or that men of ability and energy could be found to staff such a system both in terms of allegiance to their individual nations and in terms of loyalty to the United Nations as a whole. Moreover, given the fragmentary and incomplete character of the system of inspection here set forth, it seemed likely that it might prove flexible, and certainly flexibility in any such system would be a first requirement, if indeed it were to be real.

VII. Morality

One last set of considerations was posed under the general heading of the word "morality". Here the Panel requested information as to the feelings of its two scientific guests on the problem of the impact of bomb development upon the conscience of mankind. Both of these guests took the view that this was not a meaningless consideration, that the character of atomic war was indeed different in some significant sense from that of war conducted by conventional weapons, even though conventional weapons, too, could be used in fire raids. One of the guest consultants strongly resisted the notion that there could be any great gain in developing the concept of the different

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kinds of use to which atomic bombs might be put; "separability of uses seems meaningless to me", he said. One member of the Panel, on the other hand, took the view that there was a real difference between the kind of plan in which you undertake to use the atomic bomb to defend an area, or a given set of positions, and the kind of plan which you develop in order to achieve some sort of strategic decision. Not only the plan, but its effects would be demonstrably and recognizably different in the eyes of our own people and of mankind.

In this same connection, one member of the group of guests pointed out that the development of new and larger atomic weapons carried with it a certain stigma in terms of morality. To those between the United States and the USSR it must seem that the Americans were deliberately taking the lead in this kind of warfare, and they would not be persuaded by the argument advanced by the Panel's Soviet expert, to the effect that if we ~~did~~ not do it first, the other man would. The scientific expert expressed his own feeling that this argument was, in any case, not valid; he took the view that the successes the United States might achieve in developing thermo-nuclear weapons could not but be a great stimulus to Soviet development in the same field. Nor did he believe that the Soviet Union would necessarily have proceeded on its own without such a stimulus. For what was not true of atomic weapons might possibly be true of the thermo-nuclear weapon, namely, that it was not primarily a weapon suitable for decision in war, but rather a weapon of horror.

VIII. Plans for Later Meetings

It was agreed that the Panel would try to spend the four weeks between August 11 and September 5 in company together. During this period, it would attempt to formulate its thoughts and to determine in what form they should be finally organized and presented. It was tentatively agreed that the meetings of the first week would be held at Princeton, those of the second week in Hanover, New Hampshire, and those of the third week in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Respectfully submitted

McGeorge Bundy

McGeorge Bundy
Executive Secretary